

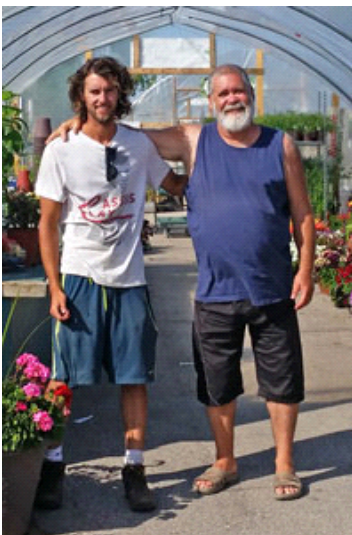
# GROWERTALKS

## Under an Acre

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### Taking the Lead

Anne-Marie Hardie



Taking over a four-generation family business is a challenging endeavor. To be successful, it requires a delicate balance of retaining the aspects that the family has valued, while evolving it to be your own. This is exactly the type of challenge that recent university graduate Terence Gyselinck leaped into.

Throughout high school and college, Terence developed fond memories of helping out on the family farm and then at their retail greenhouse operation, Riverside Greenhouses.

“I got to work with my father and friends,” says Terence. “It was the perfect summer job, from loading the trucks to working outside.”

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*Pictured: Terence (left), with the help of his father Richard (right), completely took over the family business and moved it to another part of Winnipeg.*

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With a set of greenhouses on his grandmother’s land in St. Vital—a district in Winnipeg, Manitoba—Terence’s aunt and his father Richard grew the bedding plants and continued to develop the retail part of the business. Following a slightly unconventional model, the family decided not to sell their plants on site, but instead run a pop-up retail location in Garden City, another district in Winnipeg. Each summer, Terence stepped in to help his family out with both the growing and selling of the bedding plants.

Upon graduating high school, Terence’s parents insisted that he leave the business to further his education. He obtained a business degree at the University of Manitoba. After graduating, Terence decided to return to the greenhouse to work for a year until he decided where he would put his degree into action. However, as things happened, the best place to put his newfound knowledge into action was at his own family’s business. Terence always knew that he wanted to carry on the business, but he didn’t anticipate taking it over at such a young age.

It was 2014 and Terence’s grandmother, who owned the land where Riverside Greenhouses resided, had decided to sell it to build condominiums. Terence’s father and aunt, who currently ran the greenhouse

operation, also wanted to retire from the business.

Instead of leaving the business entirely, Terence, with the support of his father, decided to relocate it. So he began his own business in St. Andrews using the original equipment from Riverside Greenhouses.

"I decided to keep going because I really liked the business," says Terence. "[Now] I grow everything at the new location in St. Andrews."

Moving the operation to a new location didn't come without its challenges, from learning about construction to the heating requirements of the greenhouse structures. Terence's goal was for the business to be operational as soon as possible, requiring him to complete a lot of the construction himself. His father has provided him guidance throughout the transition, adding valued insights on both building and running the business.

"It was really difficult; there was a huge learning curve," says Terence. "But the end result made it all worthwhile."

Carrying on with tradition, Terence continues to sell his bedding plants in Garden City from May to July. "We have rented this land on the Safeway Parking Lot since 1984, with each year making it a bit bigger," says Terence. "We are grateful that Safeway continues to allow us to be a part of their community."

This year the plants were sold in five 50-ft. temporary greenhouse structures in the Safeway parking lot, which Riverside Greenhouse installed and removed.

Adapting to the dramatic range in temperatures in Winnipeg brings with it its own set of challenges, with the possibility of freezing extending right into July. "It's very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer," says Terence. "We had to make sure that our buildings can be heated in -22F and find an economically viable way to do it."

Beginning with four greenhouses, the strong consumer demand for high-quality bedding plants has enabled Terence to expand the growing operation to six buildings. His goal is to continue to be known for offering his customer base a large selection of high-quality products. A passionate grower, one of Terence's favorite aspects about the business is responding to the needs of the plants themselves.

"Every crop is different. You have to make a lot of tough decisions; if stuff goes wrong you have to figure out how to fix it. Timing is everything," says Terence. Last year, Terence added poinsettias to his lineup, selling the plants to the local Costco.

Now in his third season, Terence is constantly seeing areas for improvement, from adding wooden benching to improving ventilation. During the off season, Terence uses the time to renovate and adapt the business in order to respond to the anticipated growth for the next year.

"Every season has its challenges. This year, it started off really strong. Now we are starting to get to the slower part of the season," says Terence. "I can't complain; it's been a good season."

The future for Riverside Greenhouses is a bright one with Terence continually looking for ways to innovate and automate so he can continue to expand the operation. A family operation for over 60 years, it's Terence's passion and work ethic that has ensured this business will continue on for the next generation to enjoy. **GT**

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*Anne-Marie Hardie is a freelance writer/speaker from Barrie, Ontario, and part of the third generation of the family-owned garden center/wholesale business Bradford Greenhouses in Barrie/Bradford, Ontario.*